

# LutheranWoman

June 2005

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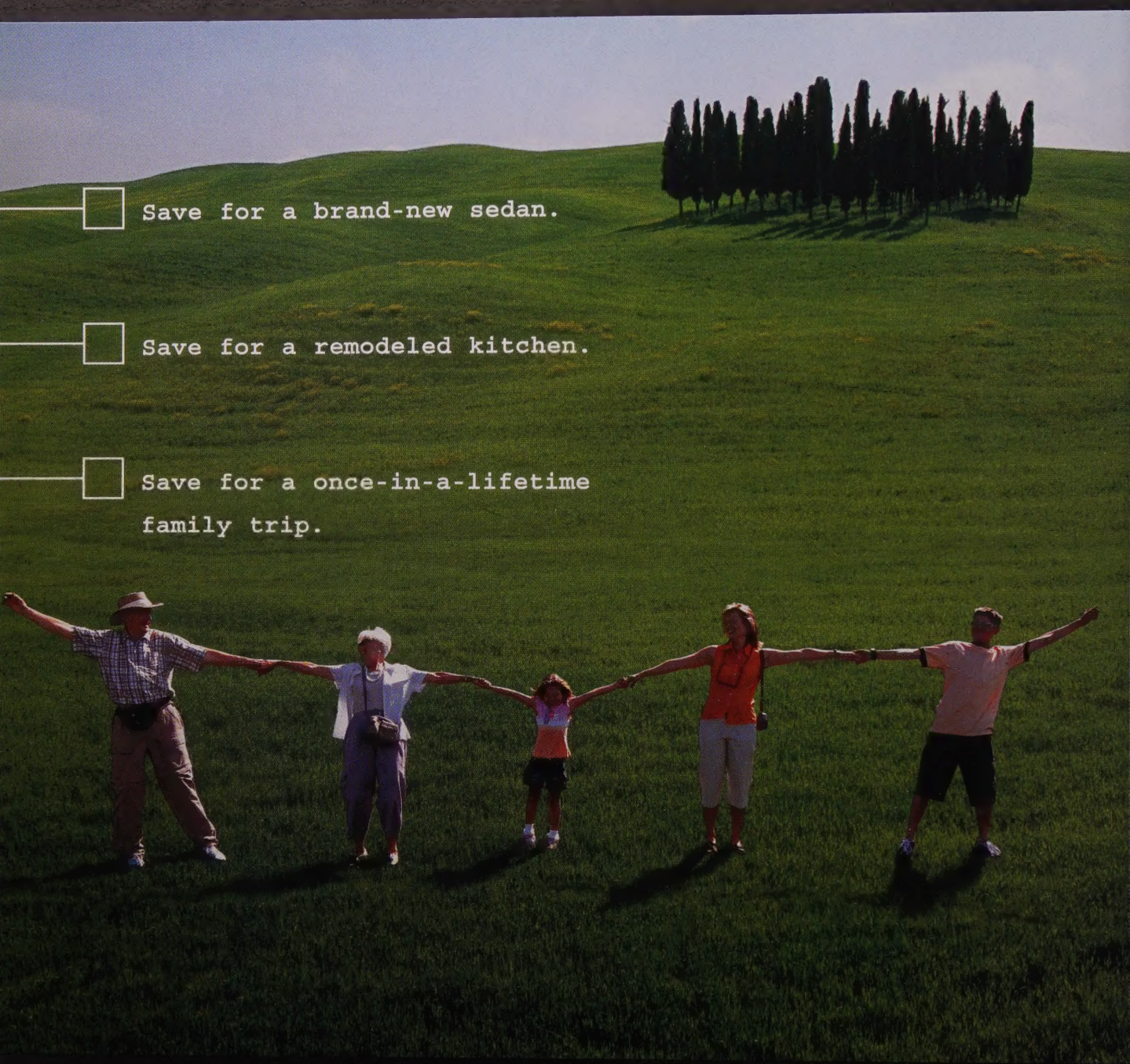
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Do we really welcome *everybody* to the table? *Elisabeth Kellogg*

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# Finding Your Tree

by Nancy Goldberger

**I HAD AN EPIPHANY IN THE BREAD AISLE AT THE GROCERY STORE. I WAS SEARCHING HIGH AND LOW** for the one type of bread that is the family favorite when suddenly the light came on. We have too many choices. I do not honestly believe that it is important to have access to more than 250 types of bread. (Okay, that figure includes the pita and pizza crusts.)

I can see a wheat, rye, white, or bagel option, but do we really need more than 250 different kinds of bread? I was so focused on finding that one loaf that it took me some time to realize that I was in an entire aisle dedicated to bread. This was a sort of I-can't-see-the-forest-for-the-trees moment. I finally found



the loaf I was looking for, but the search made me think about life and choices. Often, we can become so focused on one thing that we miss the bigger picture.

I have been in a discernment process for more than a year. It began when I felt I was being nudged toward new challenges, but I just didn't know what. I met with my mentor about this persistent feeling, and after she listened to me puzzle over whether I

should return to school or find a new volunteer opportunity, she gave me good advice.

"Find time for you every day," she said. "Start with five minutes a day, then gradually add to that time until you have an hour on a regular basis. During that quiet time, sit and think about what gives you joy. Listen to what thoughts come to you. Don't

worry about judging or deciding when the thoughts come to you, just receive them. Soon some will keep bubbling up to the surface and you will not be able to turn away from them. Pray about this. Ask God to help you be open to what comes to you, to where you are being called.

Eventually you will find

where the things that give you joy will meet with what the world needs most from you now. That is where you will need to go."

Despite my early skepticism, I put my trust in her advice and began. First five minutes, then seven, and finally I made it to 45 minutes. After a few weeks, the process began to unfold naturally, and I started looking forward to the time to sit and listen.



I really enjoyed learning this new process, and I soon began to experience what she had described. After 11 months of discernment, I realized I had long ago turned away from a passion of mine. I had left a dream behind to pursue other things: elementary educator, book editor, university administrator, magazine editor. These have all been wonderful experiences, and I have grown in many ways because of them.

However, the creative energy that runs through me is very strong. I like creating. I enjoy hearing someone's idea and helping them give it shape. I know now that this is a gift, a talent that I have been blessed with. I have enough self-confidence at this time in my life to know I am not only good at it, but I truly enjoy it. It brings me joy. I found my loaf. I felt as if I had finally seen the forest *and* the trees. It was a joyous moment for me that was soon followed by a more somber one.

I knew that to follow this path would mean leaving something very near and dear to me. Having embraced Women of the ELCA's triennium theme of Act Boldly, I knew what I needed to do. I decided to end my role as editor of this magazine to pursue my

new call. It is my hope that as you read this you will offer a prayer of support for me in my new quest.

It has been my sincere honor and pleasure to serve the women's organization as editor of *Lutheran Woman Today* magazine. I have enjoyed getting to know many of you at events or through e-mail exchanges. I have seen your faith-filled passion expressed in letters, both in agreement with articles and when you held a different opinion. Together we have experienced a major change (a reformatted magazine), embraced social justice and fair trade (through the 90 Ton Challenge), and soon you will embark on a journey to explore a more peaceful world (through the ecumenical effort of the July/August 2005 issue and into the next year).

To sit in the editor's chair for the past four years has been a marvelous experience and one I would not trade for the world. Thank you for letting me be a part of your life in this way.

**Nancy Goldberger served as editor of *Lutheran Woman Today* magazine from June 2001 to June 2005.**



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GIVE US THIS DAY

## Ripples and Circles

by Marj Leegard

**PROVERBS 19:17 SAYS, "CARING FOR THE POOR IS LENDING TO THE LORD" (CEV). WELL NOW. LENDING, IS IT?** We had it fairly well entrenched in our minds that when we gave something, it was gone. Not only gone, but irretrievable. Those to whom we give are not always *money* poor. Sometimes someone simply does not have what we have in abundance. It is so good to clear out a space by giving away. It makes us feel twice righteous. Not only are we neater than we were, but also more generous.

My sister gave me pans to make four slender loaves of French bread. I used them often. When we had guests we served fresh bread and homemade soup or fresh bread and spaghetti. Time went on and our gatherings grew smaller and kneading dough became more difficult. Then the bread pans were used only for communion on Maundy Thursday. But my friend Bernice loved to bake the communion bread, so the task passed to her. One day I began to look for the bread pans. They were not in any obvious place. Then one Sunday morning Bernice knocked on the window of our car and said, "I have something for you," and she handed us fragrant loaves of French bread. "I figured that as long as you were so kind to give me the pans, I could bake some bread for you."

The gift goes out and comes back and goes again—sometimes in the form it had and more often in a new shape. There are many who sniff the fragrance of bread baking down the hall from Bernice's and know that they will feast on the

baker's generosity. Who knows where God's lending will take the pans next?

When our daughter died, I was poor. More poor than I had ever been before. Bereft. People were kind and called, visited, and sent cards. Everything tumbled into the deep black hole of loneliness. One letter remained. It was from Marie, who is much younger than I and who had not lost a child herself. She could not speak with the wisdom of age or experience. Only from the heart of caring. She wrote, "Laurie was married and had a little daughter, but she was still your little girl." That kindness and understanding made the pit of despair habitable. Marie was there with me.

I remember when the banks failed in the late 1920s. Our tiny savings accounts—large to us because we were so small—disappeared. How different it is with the caring account that rests in God's hand. Not only is our caring safe but it multiplies daily!

When we lend our caring to God, it does not need to be recorded in some great celestial book of accounts. God does not keep our caring on a shelf. Our caring goes out again and again. When the lake is still, we toss stones in the water just to watch the ripples travel in ever widening circles. That is what caring does: It ripples outward in greater circles by God's grace.

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**LWT columnist Marj Leegard and her husband, Jerome, live in Detroit Lakes, Minn.**





## HOW ARE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF BOLDNESS IN YOUR LIFE AND CHURCH?

### BOLD FAITH

During a discussion on goal setting in an adult Bible study class, I said I had decided to make 1,000 quilts for Lutheran World Relief's quilting project. Despite a skeptic's query—"How would you get that much fabric?"—I felt no concern. Two days later, the mail carrier delivered a box from my friend Barbara. Inside were 74 pieces of fabric in two- and three-yard lengths—perfect for making quilts. Fifty-three done, 947 to go!

*Diane Schroeder—Mountain View, Mo.*

### REACHING OUT

In September 2004, 10 members of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Wash., took the bold step of saying yes to Lutheran Immigration and Social Services. We were asked to sponsor a family of nine. They were Bantu people from Somalia who had lived in a refugee camp in Kenya for 10 years. We collected furniture and clothing, found an apartment for them, and met them at the airport when they arrived.

What a transforming experience it is to get to know these gentle people, to see their eagerness to learn English, and their willingness to find a job. Now months later, we are learning what an entire lifestyle change this is for them. We try to help them see the importance of caring for their own health and well-being, yet we don't want to alter who they are as Somalians.

It is such a joy to have Halima, 4, and Ali, 2, greet us at the door with hugs and kisses and to

listen to Halima imitate my English and tell me how happy she is to be going to school. When I give Binta, their grandmother, English lessons she is so proud to show me what she has learned.

Another part of the joy has been to get to know our team from St. Mark's in a new way. Our cooperation and utilization of gifts has been a gratifying experience.

May the witness of this team reflect the light of Jesus Christ to these future U.S. citizens.

*Elaine Rodning—Tacoma, Wash.*

### GOD'S CHILDREN

I am fortunate that I had a mentor who challenged me to step away from my comfort zone. She pointed out that my God-given talents were being wasted by living so fearfully. One of her admonitions to me was, "Don't put yourself down."

By affirming my gifts, she empowered me to live boldly. To me, this means taking risks, not worrying if I make mistakes, and not waiting to act until I have pure motivation. Our calling as forgiven sinners and God's children is to pass our blessings on so we can encourage one another to experience the joy of living boldly.

*Dorothy Isdahl—Mankato, Minn.*



# Raffling Quilts: Saving Villages

by Nancy Goldberger

**IT'S A QUESTION** FREQUENTLY ASKED OF US. "WHAT HAPPENS TO THE OFFERINGS AND DONATIONS THAT are made to Women of the ELCA?" While the breadth and depth of the work that is accomplished with your dollars is too long to list here, we periodically include articles in *Lutheran Woman Today* about specific programs, events, or publications supported by your gifts. At the Sixth Triennial Gathering next month in San Antonio, participants will get to see tangible results of one of the grants projects. Furthermore, you can be a part of the future success of the program in a very exciting way. Women of the ELCA purchased three quilts made by Tlamacazapa villagers and will raffle them off during the Triennial.

These villagers were given the opportunity to learn a new skill and a new way to bring money to their community thanks to your donations. Their story is but one example of your money at work through one of

the many ongoing ministries of Women of the ELCA.

Caminamos Juntos Para Salud y Desarrollo (CJ for short) means Walking Together for Health and Development. Since 1997, the non-profit, non-governmental organization has been doing

just that with the approximately 10,000 members of the indigenous village of Tlamacazapa.

Life for the Nahuatl-speaking villagers was bleak when a team from CJ first started working with them. Living in the mountains of rural Guerrero, Mexico, most of the Tlamacazapa people earned a meager income from palm basket weaving, the primary industry of the area.

The CJ team's first priority was to get to know the people. They learned the existing dynamics, strengths, and special needs of the population,

and then developed programs to address ongoing issues in the village. Focusing on three main areas (health and well-being, water and sanitation, and



*A patchwork quilt produced by Tlamacazapa villagers.*





*Women learn to sew quilts in CJ workshop.*

income generation), the programs included everything from oral health to nutrition to finding clean water alternatives. By walking with the people, the team has instituted change.

Despite this positive change, almost 60 percent of the children are severely malnourished or undernourished still today. The majority of the adults are illiterate and most women over the age of 30 have never been outside the village. Years of living in survival mode has taken its toll on the people, but thanks to the efforts of the CJ team, hope for a better tomorrow burns brightly.

The CJ team realized that diversification of income would benefit the villagers. So they developed a sewing group and have been teaching participants sewing basics and other business-related skills. CJ applied for a Women for the ELCA grant in 2003, seeking financial assistance to expand the sewing project.

As a part of the application process, Susan E. Smith, the executive director of the program, described the quilt production workshop and its benefits for the women of the village. It was the first time most of the women who participated in

the workshops had been given an opportunity to be valued as creators and decision makers. They have been able to cultivate opportunities and develop personal and group skills. Since CJ had already established a successful track record with the people of the community, the argument for being a part of their continued efforts was compelling. The grant application committee agreed.

Women of the ELCA grant money is assisting participants of the Tlamacazapa Quilting Project with learning-to-sew workshops, design and creation of beautiful, durable quilts, and literacy classes with a focus on reading patterns and other business skills. It can make a world of difference for the women of Tlamacazapa.

Proceeds from your participation in the quilt raffle at the triennial gathering will be poured right back into the Women of the ELCA grants program. Tickets will be available at the registration desk. A wonderful circle of love will be stitched together over time and geography. On behalf of the women of Tlamacazapa Quilting Project and other grant recipients, thank you for your continued support of the Women of the ELCA grants program.

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**Nancy Goldberger is the former editor of *Lutheran Woman Today* magazine.**

*We cannot accept contributions to the Tlamacazapa Quilting Project because it is independent of Women of the ELCA. If you would like to support similar projects that empower women around the world and help create stronger communities, contact Emily Hansen, associate for programs, at 800-638-3522, ext. 2736, for information on the Women of the ELCA grants program. Your financial support can make a positive difference in so many lives.*



## A Measure of Support

by Gail Kittleson

**EARLY THIS YEAR, I HAD THE DISTINCT PLEASURE OF REROUTING A CURSE. I KNOW THAT SOUNDS LIKE** something you might read in a fairy tale. You know the scenario: Good fairy nullifies the doom-and-gloom prophecy of a storybook witch. This adventure, however, took place in an ordinary financial institution.

I had stopped at the bank to make a deposit. As I waited in line, I heard a conversation between the lady ahead of me and the teller. Their words echoed throughout the room.

"All I'm trying to tell you, ma'am, is that our policy is not to cash checks for people who don't have an account with us," the young teller said. The customer shifted from one foot to the other, not about to leave. By the increasingly angry sound of her voice, I could picture her attempting a stare down.

I imagined her glare as she pushed her check forward again, demanding, "The last time I was here, you cashed this with no problem."

In a still-professional voice, the clerk repeated the bank's policy once again. Realizing that she was getting nowhere, the customer barked a few more choice words before slamming her purse shut. "And I hope you have a rotten new year, honey!" she shouted as she turned and headed for the door.

I have no idea why she so fervently needed to cash this check, and only rarely do I take the side of the establishment. But as I stepped up to the counter, I turned partially toward the retreating woman's back and said loudly, "Well, I hope you have an

especially *good* new year!"

The teller, along with two other young women behind the counter and another customer waiting nearby, smiled at me. As I began my transaction, I told her, "You did a great job keeping your cool." The young teller was still calm and professional. "It helps that I've dealt with her before," she quietly said. Hmm. So this woman was known for being difficult. By the time I left, the red in the teller's cheeks had begun to subside.

"Why do people do this to themselves and to others?" I wondered on the drive home. "If someone's miserable, why do they have to spread around the agony?" Even as I pondered these questions, the answers started to come. I know this is how life works: Our emotional decisions affect not only ourselves, but our families, friends, and sometimes complete strangers.

Yearly resolutions rank low on my priority list, but after reading Luke's parable of the 10 pounds (Luke 19:11-27) that morning, I came close to making a resolution. I decided to act more boldly in my everyday life, especially when I see injustices.

The one person in Luke's story who didn't please his boss was the one who kept his gift to himself. Two decades ago, I might not have been bold enough to "bless" the bank clerk so assertively. My prayers at that time were for my children—that they would develop into strong people anchored deeply in acceptance and love. I wanted them to launch out more boldly on life's seas than I had. As



young adults, they have both made the most of opportunities I doubt I would have even considered reaching for when I was their age. Perhaps by watching them grow and blossom, I have become more bold as well.

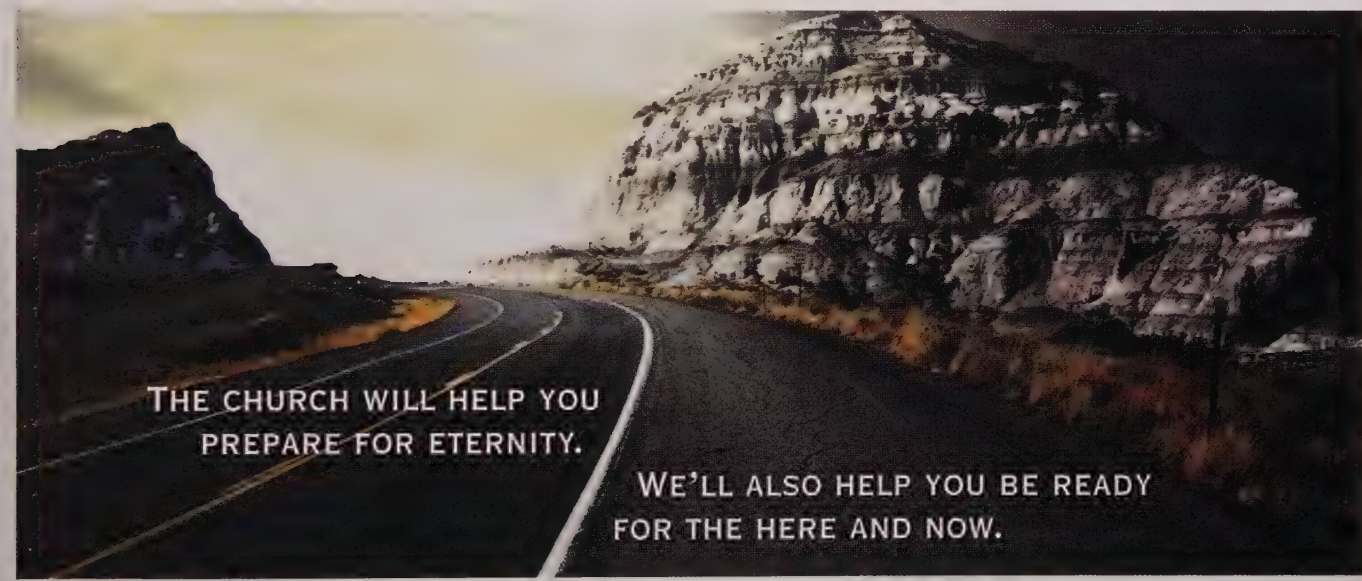
Maybe having read Luke's example of the risk-taking requirement of discipleship shortly before going to the bank that day gave me courage to speak up. I prayed as I read the story, "Okay, Lord, show me what specific risks you have in mind for me."

What did the risk entail in this instance? I suppose the angry woman could have heard my pronouncement opposing her curse and turned her rage on me.

Was the risk worth the satisfaction of giving what I had—encouragement—to the teller who had shown bold courage in the face of opposition? Yes, absolutely. At the time, it didn't even feel like a risk. The sense I had was of warmth, strength, human compassion, kindness. How satisfying to look into her eyes knowing that I had supplied a measure of support.

---

*Gail Kittleson, a writer who enjoys teaching communications and being a wife, mom, and grandmother, lives with her husband in St. Ansgar, Iowa. She recently published a women's gift book, *Aqua Moon*.*



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# STEALTHY BOLDNESS

by Catherine Malotky

**S**ometimes I wonder. Does my faith do more than assure me of an eternity with a God who loves me? I think it does—at least the Old Testament prophets say so. And Jesus talked about how to live all the time. So, faith, what about the here and now? How should I live today according to you?

Should I become a radical, like John the Baptist maybe, calling for bold action for big change? Not likely! My people are not famous. We do not

march in protests—hardly ever.

We do not live an alternative lifestyle. We do not dress with wild abandon or live deep in the woods or off the grid of reality. Growing up as I did—in a Lutheran, middle-class family, the oldest of six children—I saw and have learned a certain stealthy boldness. Rather than leading a revolution, I lean to a boldness determined to shift the momentum of life in this world toward God's will and way. For me, this fits.

## FAMILY TRADITION

My father's sisters both graduated from college, which was something in those days. They were part of the first generation born off the farm. Family lore says that Pauline, my great-grandmother, set the stage for this kind of equality. She, who had not spent much time in a school, worked to educate herself on her own. Her attitude about education infiltrated the family. I think there was a certain boldness in that—this farmer's wife who cared about learning





However, we all can be bold about our faith and what it means in our daily lives. We all can live with a certain determination to be God's heart and hands in this world.

and especially the education of her girls.

My mother's boldness bubbled up pretty often. She made it clear when she was pregnant with me that she would give birth without medication. This was unusual then, considered old-fashioned and even backwards. Drugs would spare her the pain of childbirth, but my mother had done her research. Even though an intern tried to shame her ("You'll be crying for pain relief before you're done," he sneered), she was determined.

And she succeeded. Six times. Now, you may have made different choices if you bore children, and I'm not trying to say my mother's choices were better. However, I think it was bold of her to buck the obstetrical establishment of her day and do it *au naturel*, which *she* thought would be better for her babies and for her.

Some of us will make the big moves. Some of us will have the gifts to take on public roles and pursue ordination or elected office or company leadership. But most

of us Lutheran girls and women will not. We may not have the opportunity or we may have other gifts. However, we all can be bold about our faith and what it means in our daily lives. We all can live with a certain determination to be God's heart and hands in this world.

#### **BOLD OUT OF NECESSITY**

The women of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, in the midst of a poor inner-city neighborhood, have been supporting and welcoming



homeless people into their church building every night for almost two decades now. In the beginning, they only knew they had to help. They had no idea that the smell of dirty socks would soon permeate the building. They had no idea that they would soon build showers and install fans. They had no idea that occasionally a homeless person, often with multiple coats and stuffed pockets, might choose to sit next to them at worship on a Sunday morning, sometimes mumbling, often smelly, but always warm. They had no idea that when they came to church for evening meetings, they might have to make their way through homeless people waiting for the doors to open at seven. It was hard and sometimes even scary. But they were bold enough to say they wanted to help and bold enough to try to solve the problems that came up when they did. Some of them agreed to be the overnight host or bring dinner. Some of them began to advocate for the homeless, working with the local government to address the issues behind all those mattresses on the church basement floor. They are Lutheran women, and they are bold.

#### **BOLD LOVE**

Lurrine visited her husband in the nursing home nearly every day. Early in their marriage, she had followed him into the mission field. For many years she lived away from family, raising her kids in a foreign culture that in time she came to love. Then, when he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, she boldly set about facing her future and his. She waited and watched with him for nearly a decade, and when he died, she wept for all she had lost. Yet I saw her not long after his death, out on a bitterly cold day, volunteering for an event at a school she cares about. She's carrying on and doing good. Of course she is grieving, but she is also living and loving. Given what she's been through, I think that's pretty bold.

#### **BOLD TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE**

Jane had a difficult childhood. Her soul and body carry the scars of sexual and physical abuse. Her marriage ended after many years, and she still grieves that she was not healthy enough to have chosen well in the first place or to have healed the relationship she had. She faces significant financial worries now, but she is realistic about it all. She will work for many years

still, but she is paying attention and being wise. She does not take expensive vacations just because she can afford to now. She does not want to be a burden to her children, so she is saving for the future, to make sure that she will be able to support herself when she finally retires. Jane's boldness, like Lurrine's, is about courage. She is healing. She volunteers to mentor women in a shelter. She has learned so much, and she is determined to share it.

#### **BOLD MATURITY**

Carrie is a real beauty, knocking the socks off the young men at the college she attends. She did a little experimenting with alcohol before she left home. "I wanted to know my limits," she explained. Now she often finds herself sober when others are not. When she came upon a drunken, unconscious classmate, and no one else knew what to do, she recruited help to get the girl inside and warm, instructed someone to call 911, and probed the girl's drunken friends to find out what had happened. When the paramedics arrived she told them the details she had uncovered and accompanied the girl to the hospital. Now, think about that peer pressure. Wasn't that a



little bold of her—to be sober and helpful? Might her example invite her peers to think about other ways to have fun?

### **BOLD ENOUGH TO SAY NO**

Amy loves basketball. She started playing enthusiastically at age 10. She excelled. But as she and her teammates grew, the competition tightened, and practice took up more and more time. She began to wonder if she wanted to commit her entire extracurricular life to this one activity. At the tender age of 15, she decided she would not. What kind of pressure did she feel to just keep going, to contribute to the team, to try for a scholarship, to be assured of an identity as she entered high school? Instead, she broke free. She is trying other things now. She was bold. She followed an inner wisdom that told her she needed a variety of activities to be whole and fulfilled. Though variety may not be what every girl needs, she knew it's what *she* needed.

### **EVERYDAY BOLDNESS IS NOT AN OXYMORON**

None of these women may seem particularly remarkable, at least not on the surface. They have not shown up in newspaper headlines. They have not sponsored

earth-shaking legislation or led a revolution. But all of these women have been bold. All of them have heard a call from God, and all of them have answered, often in spite of opposition. Where do they find the courage to take a bold stand rather than the path of least resistance?

Each of these women heard wisdom spoken in her ear. Though they may not have been able to identify that wisdom at the moment, it was the voice of God calling them to the wonder and value of their creation. It is true that the circumstances of many of our lives don't make it easy for us to think of ourselves as uniquely fashioned by God and given as a gift to the world. Babies still need to be fed in the middle of the night, whether we have to get up and go to work in the morning or not. Some of us live in places where opportunities are limited, so we may never get to contribute where we have the greatest potential.

But we all can give somehow, and I'm pretty sure that small daily acts of boldness are as powerful in bringing God's will and way to bear in our world as are the more dramatic examples we read or hear about. We all have particular gifts to offer to this God-given task of bringing

justice and mercy into our world. How will we influence the world we live in? How will we act and organize and protect and grow as God would have us do?

We can recycle, even though it's a hassle. We can drive an energy-efficient car, even though most of our friends don't. We can take time for self-care, even though the people around us might call it selfish or wonder what's gotten into us. We can act on our passions, whether that means loving a spouse, painting a sunset, or writing letters to representatives. We can believe we make a difference in this world because, as women of faith, we do. We've been created to make a difference. We've been called to make a difference. And we've been redeemed so that we might be able to forgive ourselves when we don't think and act as boldly as we could.

You go, girl. Listen to that inner voice. It's *God's* invitation.

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**Catherine Malotky, an ordained minister, currently works for the ELCA Board of Pensions and is a regular contributor to LWT's "Amen" column.**





# DISCOVERING **BOLD** Women in Blue

by Anne Eassey

**T**wo groups of women stood in the sun one morning in Lima, Peru. One group of North and South Americans was boarding a bus. Across the plaza, the other group—all nurses, dressed in blue scrubs—was picketing the Ministry of Justice.

The North Americans on the bus regarded the sea of blue scrubs uncertainly. To us, a strike—especially by women—had a tinge of the impolite. Most of us were raised to believe that playing by the rules would take us farther than complaining.

Not necessarily true, the South Americans on the bus pointed out. When you're employed by a government that

limits your pay, a strike may be your only recourse. When no one else will speak on your behalf, you must lift your own voice.

That nurses' strike was the first act of boldness the 24 women who traveled together in November 2004 would witness. But not the last. United by our companion synod relationships, we had come from seven U.S. states and seven South American countries to meet the women of Peru and Brazil. Every story we heard was bold.

## **Bold women in a macho culture**

To North Americans, gender is a box we check on a form. But in male-dominant South America, we

learned quickly that *genero* means paying attention to women's voices and rights.

"The culture of machismo tells women they can't leave the house," explained fellow traveler Matilda Ponce of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Peru (ILEP). Over the next two weeks, we heard more: about men who see women as property and make all the decisions about what they can and cannot do. About women who don't have the birth certificates that entitle them to claim citizenship. And about the shrugged shoulders that greet women fleeing domestic violence.

In response, Lutheran church projects throughout Latin America



are helping women stop seeing themselves as objects and start participating in society. "In ILEP, women discover their creative capacities and skills and develop as people who can do more than have kids and tend the house," said Ponce, who coordinates ILEP's programs for women and families.

At Kairos, an ecumenical project in Peru supported by Women of the ELCA, we found men and women applying *genero* to the Scripture.

"As women, we often feel we don't have any rights," spokeswoman Maria Elena Zelada told us. "And Christian women have developed theological reasons not to have rights. So we are dedicated to resolving a fundamental problem: how to convince women that there is equality with men by means of the Bible whose vision is patriarchal."

Boldness does not mean confrontation for this group. "That would close doors," Zelada says. "But as the consciousness of women has grown, they have been demanding greater participation."

### **Speaking out on working conditions**

Chardita, 13, works as a housemaid for a wealthy family from

7:00 a.m. until noon and attends school from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Then she goes home and helps care for her siblings. "I have some difficulties with my studies as a result," she confessed.

At the Women and Family Association in Cajamarca, Peru, Chardita and her friends get help with homework, learn ways to prevent abuse by employers, and speak out on their situation through marches and presentations. "We are trying to raise public consciousness about child domestic workers, because we are being exploited," Chardita told us.

In Cajamarca, the voices of women were clamorous. Washerwomen explained how they had organized themselves to demand better pay and working conditions. Older women domestics told us how they resolve problems with deadbeat or abusive employers. And young single mothers described their efforts to prevent early pregnancies among their peers. "We go from door to door in pairs to explain to parents about the kind of communication they should have with their children because we know that failure of communication is the biggest factor in undesired pregnancy," Lucy Rojas

Morales explained. "We also talk to teen mothers and their boyfriends about contraception methods."

### **Bold? Who, me?**

Matilda, Chardita, and Lucy used their boldness to improve their own lives and those of their sisters. Their stories helped us North Americans begin to see how we could use our own boldness—as church and civic leaders in a society that usually honors women's voices—to lift up women around the world.

Today, one traveler is studying Spanish to better understand her sisters. One sharpened her advocacy skills by attending the annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days. Another used what she learned to draft a resolution on economic globalization that she will introduce at the Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering in San Antonio, Texas, July 5–10.

"When women get together in community, miracles are possible," say the women of the Peruvian Lutheran Church. Our trip is over, but our miracles of acting boldly are just beginning.

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**Anne Basye was part of the ELCA women's delegation to South America in November 2004.**





# envisioning holiness

by Joan Chittister

The following is a condensed excerpt of the chapter, "Wholeness," in Joan Chittister's recent book, *In the Heart of the Temple: My Spiritual Vision for Today's World*, a collection of her essays with a foreword by Martin Marty.

Jonathan Edwards once wrote: "Saints do not see things others do not see. On the contrary. They see just what everyone else sees—but they see it differently." The question is, what do we see in our time, and how do we see it? And what does that have to do with being a woman and a person of faith? Or to put it another way, what does that have to do with being a person of faith, whether you are a woman or not?

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The situation which we are required to see is a vast, complicated, crucial, and obviously skewed one: Two-thirds of the hungry of the world are women; two-thirds of the illiterate of the world are women; two-thirds of the poor of the world are women.

Water, air, trees, and land are destroyed everywhere; fertile fields, rain forests, tropical gardens, oceans, lakes, and rivers, have been raped, ravaged, spoiled, soiled, and poisoned. Nuclear weaponry threatens the very existence of the planet and has the effrontery to call itself “defense,” and all the while a world filled with churchgoers is also filled with the obscenely poor. Clearly, we have not reached the point of seeing “differently.” It is possible that we have not reached the point of seeing at all.

The question is then: What relationship, if any, is there between theology, ecology, and feminism?

Because we are made “in God’s image,” we conclude we are also God’s agents on earth. Free. Autonomous. Unrestrained. “Fill the earth and subdue it, rule over every living creature,” we repeat to ourselves. And the lesson has been well learned.

Those who have the resources to dominate, dominate the resources. Those who lack the power to dominate become a resource. No

morals lost; no ethic spoiled; no sin sinned.

Humans are superior to nature, but males—the real crown, the pinnacle, the divine pride of creation—are superior to women. Or, to be more direct, women are other than men, and therefore lower than men. “A helpmate fit for man,” we translate Genesis to say.

According to scholar David Friedman, [the Hebrew words] *ezer kenegdo* are normally translated as “power equal” everywhere in Scripture but here. And “helpmate”—not leader, not thinker, not visionary—has woman, therefore, been allowed to be.

In the hierarchy of creation, women, obviously, as philosophy once taught and the churches theologized, were suited for things of the body—things of nature, natural things. Men, on the other hand, whose bodies were not suited for anything inherently creative, must then, men reasoned, be clearly suited for the things of the soul—the things of the mind, of course—the spiritual things of life, obviously. Man/the male was closest to God, the theologians argued, because it is the mind that reflects the essential attribute of God—the spirit.

In the hierarchy of creation, then, instead of gaining because they have both creative body and rational soul, women are defined

by their bodies and robbed of the quality of their souls. When Francis Bacon in the seventeenth century introduced the experimental method to science, the gathering of data to gain power over nature, he based his justification for the process on the unarguable—on theology. The premises of a science based on a theology of domination led to the obvious. Since there was no spirit in nature, there was nothing in nature to respect. After that, we’re in scientific free fall.

The coup was now complete: Nature was lifeless, manipulable, valueless, eternally subordinate. Clearly, science and theology were not natural enemies. On the contrary—science and theology made for the perfect marriage. The theologians rested everything on the superiority of spirit. The scientists concentrated on the subjugation of matter.

We could do whatever we wanted with any “other” less human than we—indigenous/aborigines/blacks/women/gays/lesbians. We could take what we wanted from everywhere. We could squeeze the earth dry of what we wanted anywhere and make the rest of the world sinfully poor because it had all been made for humans. For us. For the fittest and, therefore, for the fittest of us. And the “fittest” of us were clearly not women.



Those who have the resources to dominate,  
**dominate the resources.** Those who lack the  
power to dominate **become a resource.**

After all, religion said that the “order of creation” was determinate. Hierarchy was a given. Men were on top of the pyramid and women were the bottom of the bottom.

And science confirmed what theology taught: that women were “natural” by virtue of a physiology designed for birthing rather than thinking. Therefore women—naturally—“belong” in the home. Men—naturally—are the proprietors of religion and politics, of culture and thought.

The patriarchal world view that follows from those premises is a clear one: It is hierarchical in structure, dominative in essence, dualistic in evaluations, and male in its norms. Clearly, what underlies the conflict in theology, ecology, and feminism is the theology of domination: the notion that some of us were made to be—meant to be—better than the rest of us, that some of us are in charge of the human race and we know who we are. That is the theology of domination.

But the theology of domination is a recipe for conflict, struggle, suppression, oppression, and revolution. And we are in it. And it is everywhere. There can be no doubt about it: We need a new world view. And we need it now because the world is shifting.

If the earth’s population were a village of 100 people, there would be 62 Asians, 12 Europeans, eight Africans, and only 13 “villagers” from the Americas. Seventy of them would be non-white. Sixty-seven would be non-Christian. Fourteen could not read. Twenty-one would be undernourished. One of them would have a college education and two of them would own a computer. And fifty-nine percent of the entire wealth of that village would be held by only six people, and all of them would be white, male, from the United States of America. No wonder those six buy so many guns. The world is tilting and tipping and is terribly out of kilter.

But how shall we build a new world view? Where can it come from?

First, Christianity must remember that God pronounces all of creation “good,” not just some of it good, some better, some best.

Second, Christianity must realize that human responsibility for the earth requires care, not sovereignty.

Third, Christianity must revive its sense of sacramentality, that all things reveal the creative presence of God.

Fourth, Christianity must honor human finiteness, that humans are simply part of creation—its most contingent, its most vulnerable, its most fragile part, indeed. All the rest of creation, in fact, can live without humanity. It is only humanity that is totally dependent on the rest of creation for its existence.

Fifth, Christianity must come to see that it is the Sabbath, the contemplative mind that is the crown of creation, not “man.”

Finally, sixth, Christianity must rediscover Genesis 2, the companionship story and begin to see it differently. The truth is that



in Genesis 2, God brings all the animals to Adam to be named. To be brought into relationship with. No one looks into the eye of an animal, names it, and then kills it. We name domestic animals—the ones we take into the family, the ones we take responsibility for, the ones we relate to on an individual basis. The Scripture is astoundingly clear: By bringing the animals to the human for naming, God demonstrates that it is relationship, not domination, not individualism, that makes humankind “like God.”

The “common good” includes all of creation, including the non-human. But if that is the case, males are hardly autonomous and certainly not the universal norm of anything.

Sexism, therefore, is heresy, is pathological pride, is hubris raised to high art. The truth is that science has rediscovered theology for us—and calls it ecology. Science knows now that everything is interrelated, that humanity is only one aspect of the fabric of life, that our connectedness is infinitely complex and that, having poisoned the earth and polluted the air, we are now on the verge of extreme natural degradation and irreversible natural changes. If we do not see our sin and call it that,

the anthropocentric—human-centered—world view has failed us. The androcentric—male-centered—world view has destroyed us, has put us in contention with ourselves, with the universe, and with God the creator.

The world does not exist for us alone. On the contrary. Diversity is necessary. That is why feminism confronts androcentrism, this simplification of life to a one-gendered viewpoint only. Because simplification isn't good for anyone. It's not good for women. It's not good for the planet. It's not even good for men—it isolates them emotionally, it distorts them socially, it overdrives them physically, and it makes impossible demands on them psychologically.

Androcentrism is unspiritual because it ignores the spiritual value of the other half of the human race; it is immoral because it exploits the rest of creation. And it is unchristian because it fails to find God incarnate in everything.

Women know that they see differently, and they want that vision honored for the sake of the human race. Women know that they think and feel differently about many things, and they want those thoughts and feelings factored into decisions—

for the sake of the human race. Women know that they are different physically and they want their bodies valued, honored, and listened to in all the questions that affect life (not simply the biological ones) for the sake of the human race.

Feminism rejects hierarchy and domination not for itself alone but for the sake of the rest of the human race. Feminism—real feminism—is a new world view that transcends male chauvinism, rejects female chauvinism, embraces creation, and rejoices in nature and sees the “image of God” in equal grandeur in both female and male, in the totality of creation.


We must begin to see that domination is the way of the weak. But our world—our entire world, with all its colors, all its women and men, its plants and animals—has need of empowerment now. We must begin to see differently if we really want to be holy.

We must begin, all of us, to put the tree of life back together again.

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**Joan Chittister is a best-selling author, an internationally known lecturer, and the executive director of Benetvision: a resource and research center for contemporary spirituality in Erie, Pa.**

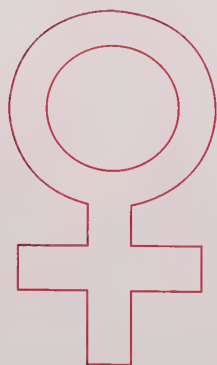


A red fuzzy sweater is laid flat, filling most of the frame. The texture of the knit is clearly visible. The title text is overlaid on the sweater.

# **FUZZY** SWEATER **FEMINIST**

*by Jennifer Basye Samler*





**H**ere's how this feminist spent her day: taking a sick child to the doctor, vacuuming the living room, running a couple of loads of laundry through the washer and dryer, and baking a loaf of whole wheat bread. (Lest you hate me right off the bat, I will admit to using a bread machine.) In between loads of laundry, I read the obituary of the writer Elizabeth Janeway, who died this year at age 91. The headline in my local paper identified her as "Elizabeth Janeway, feminist author," and the article went on to say that "among feminists, Mrs. Janeway was a less strident, but still powerful voice." *Less strident?* Where did this notion that feminists are strident come from?

It certainly seems prevalent on the airwaves nowadays, from one end of the dial to the other. Would the description of my typical day come as a surprise to Rush Limbaugh or some of the other conservative pundits who carry on about "femi-nazis"? How do they imagine a feminist spends her time? Perhaps I should have been at the Bush inauguration holding up a sign stridently supporting the inalienable rights of women or busily writing a

strident letter to the president of Harvard to protest his remarks that differences between the sexes might explain why fewer women reach the pinnacle of success in science and math. I'm sure some feminists did exactly those things, and stridently too, but like I said, I had some clothes to wash.

How is it that the word *feminist* came to be so unappealing? I have a theory from my long-ago days as a political consultant. It seems that whoever manages to define a term to his or her advantage and make it stick wins the contest. Men who don't want women as equals seem to have loud voices. Over the years, they have reshaped the word *feminist* as a slur, and now many women and most young girls are reluctant to define themselves with that word. Rush-like guys call feminists a bunch of loud-mouthed man-haters and cry out, "Who'd want to be like them?"

Man-haters? Odd, but in all the years I spent at a girls' high school in the '70s, a women's college in the '80s, and in business in the '90s, never once did I hear any woman denounce men. Maybe I was out of the room at the time, talking to a boyfriend.



Feminism, for me, has never included the thought that men are an enemy of any kind. Rather than allowing the word to be tarnished by negative stereotypes, why not focus instead on what it really means?

### WHAT DOES THE DICTIONARY SAY?

Curious about the root meaning, I turned to the bookshelf. I first sought the advice of a reassuringly thick and heavy edition of the *Random House Dictionary*, this one published in 1966. Now, 1966 is a year that most of us would associate with the early stirrings of the modern feminist movement in America, and this dictionary defines “feminism” in a very mild way—*the doctrine advocating social and political rights of women equal to those of men.*

Mine is a two-writer household, with several dictionaries on hand. Browsing through the shelves again, I found a newer one, a 1998 *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Edition*. Feminism here is defined as *the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes*. I was glad to see that money had been added to the equation. That was a primary motivator for Elizabeth Janeway, too, according to her obit. As the wife of economist Eliot Janeway, she was no

doubt well aware of the importance of money, and she wanted equal pay for equal work. This seems like a reasonable expectation.

Both dictionary definitions sound perfectly positive to me. They are evenhanded descriptions of the possibilities for women, not indictments of the circumstances that have held us back.

Unwilling to focus only on my own thoughts about feminism, though, I polled a few friends—a woman in her 60s, another in her 50s, and one in her 40s. I guessed that each woman’s age and experiences shaped her willingness to describe herself as a feminist. I’m 46 myself, and my life parallels so many of the advances won by the women’s movement in the ’70s that I sometimes feel as if I’ve just bobbed along with the wave of progress and ended up on shore exactly when it did. Here, then, are the responses I received when I asked these three women if they are feminists:

**JUDITH:** “Of course! I believe that women have rights equal to men.”

**BARBARA:** “Certainly! I’m proud of it. The suffragists were amazing, and we have so much to be grateful for. By calling myself a feminist, I feel connected to their work. Lucky us.”

**DEINA:** “No! Well, some parts I agree with . . . like that women deserve the same rights as men, but I just don’t think that they deserve to play in the NFL.”

Huh? I guess I missed the part about playing in the National Football League as one of those advantages feminists were bucking for. I must have (once again) been outside the room talking to some cute guy while all the high-level political planning was going on. That’s not to say that some women wouldn’t want to play for the NFL and make boatloads of money. However, I don’t know that that is at the core of what we are discussing here.

Anyway, can you guess the ages of my friends by their answers? Judith is in her 60s, Barbara is in her 50s, and, yes, Deina is 41. I have not yet polled someone in her 20s, but I would be interested to learn what her response would be. My guess is that she might not want to be too closely associated with the word.

### EMPOWER YOUR INNER PRINCESS

As a writer and lecturer, I have often climbed on a soapbox to urge women to take charge of their money and their careers. Build up your net worth! Build a business of your own! But how



many ways can you write about personal finance? As a topic, it had worn thin for me. In the past two years, I've shifted from writing about women and money to writing about small luxuries, moderate indulgences, and losing weight. Instead of addressing large groups of women on the topics of investing and savvy marketing, I now stand on the stage in a bright pink St. John suit and giggle with women about martinis and massages.

About midway through my talk on small and inexpensive ways that women can take care of themselves, I begin to call myself as a "fuzzy-sweater feminist." The fuzzy-sweater part is a reference to my book *Wear More Cashmere: 151 Luxurious Ways to Pamper Your Inner Princess*. Not exactly what one might imagine as a feminist's creed. Ah, but one would be wrong. Scattered among the suggestions on how to feel like a movie star (high-heeled mules and a sarong—instant glam!) and an inexpensive way to duplicate the very expensive hot rock spa massage (a couple of rocks, a crock pot, and some massage oil) are long passages in which I remind women that they have the ability to create the life they want rather than sitting back and waiting for someone to do it

for them. Empower that inner princess, honey.

The fuzzy-sweater feminist line always gets a laugh. Not only is it my intention to get a smile from the women and men in the room, but also (in as non-strident a way as possible) to gently reclaim and re-brand the word feminist as, well, more feminine. Ultra-feminine, in fact.

I extended the fuzzy-sweater feminist philosophy to losing weight in a recent diet book. A feminist diet book? Indulge me while I offer some advice from the final chapter of *The Martini Diet: The Self-Indulgent Way to a Thinner, More Fabulous You* (feel free to picture me standing before you in that bright pink suit, which, I must tell you, as a thrifty Lutheran woman, I bought secondhand).

I firmly believe (as I say in my book) that you and I are in charge of our own destinies, responsible for our own lives, and perfectly capable of creating our own opportunities. At the same time, I am appalled at the way women are actively discouraged from feeling pleased with the size and shape of their bodies. We must be strong in the face of the unhealthy messages we receive. We must be strong and courageous in the face of advertising that is designed to make us feel weak, inadequate,

and imperfect—unless we buy the advertiser's product.

The martini theme has to do with restraint when approaching food, the same way that you only have one drink instead of six or seven. Quite a bit of the guidance in my weight-loss book has to do with encouraging women to be proud of who we are now and not absorb the negative messages we receive. Far more important than gaining entry to the NFL, I think.

Like Judith and Barbara, I say "of course" I am a feminist. Should the dictionary folks get wind of my less strident but still powerful voice and ask me to help write the next edition's entry, here is what I suggest: *Feminist: a woman who believes in her own unlimited strength and courage.*

Ah! The buzzer on the dryer has sounded, and it smells like the bread might be done. Time for this fuzzy-sweater feminist to get back to her family. Here's hoping that my fuzzy sweater fits you, too.

---

**Jennifer Basye Sander is the author of *Wear More Cashmere* and *The Martini Diet*. She lives with her husband, Peter, and sons, Julian and Jonathan, in Granite Bay, Calif.**





# FABRIC OF LOVE

by Carol Kehlmeier

**NO ONE KNOWS EXACTLY WHEN THE FIRST SEWING CIRCLE MET** at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Westerville, Ohio, but Aziel Shockley, 95, remembers that her mother and grandmother were members of the group. "Then, it was called the Ladies' Aid Society," Shockley said. "And my grandmother was known for making perfect hand-sewn buttonholes."

Shockley, who is part of the sewing group today, has witnessed many changes—from hand-sewn buttonholes to computerized sewing machines. She's also seen differences in items sewn for Lutheran World Relief (LWR), an organization that, in its 60-year history, has provided more than 21 million quilts for people in need.

What hasn't changed, however, are the close friendships formed during the sewing group's time together and the women's desire to help the less fortunate. Between six and a dozen women gather in their church's fellowship hall Wednesday mornings to cut squares, design, and stitch quilts with fabric donated by the congregation. Though the women know that the quilts may be dragged through the mud in some faraway place, they make them beautiful and sturdy.

In the past, when most of the parish was farmland, the women met to sew layettes to give to poor mothers in foreign lands. When layettes were no longer requested, they sewed dresses for the women of New Guinea. Their time together was also spent exchanging news from around the countryside. Today the land near the white frame church has fewer farms and more subdivisions. Just as it was for farm wives then, there are many demands on women today, but a few have chosen to continue the tradition of the sewing circle.

Until recently, church members have referred to the group as the stewardship ladies, the quilting ladies, or the women who sew on Wednesday mornings. The group had no official name until they adopted "Piece and Sew." They say the name refers to piecing and sewing together fabric, and also it suggests the lasting friendships sewn together over the years.

Their friendships don't stop at the church door. "There was a time when we brought our children and they played while we worked," said Faye Ayers, a 43-year member of the group. "Later we might go shopping together." Potlucks also have been a part of the group's tradition, she said. "If



*Women of "Piece and Sew" stand in front of anniversary quilt.*

no potluck is planned, we might go out to lunch."

Mary Virginia McLeod has attended since the 1950s. "I remember sewing layettes and then dresses for women in New Guinea. When that need stopped, we began making quilts." The quilts, each different in design, are not kept by the designers, and they're not for sale. In 2004, the women donated more than 100 quilts, including 54 to LWR and 23 to flood victims in southeast Ohio. Others went to local charities and to babies born in the congregation.

June Roush, chairwoman and a 31-year member, said the group also sews lap robes and neck pillows and sends them to Lutheran Village of Columbus, an assisted living home. The unified goal of the women as they meet is to create warm quilts to send to God's people of all races, religions, and ethnic backgrounds.

In 2002, Ayers and Elaine Jebesen, a five-year member, created a quilt to celebrate the 150th anniversary of St. Paul Church. Digitized photos of scenes around the church were transferred onto fabric, then sewn together to create a beautiful anniversary quilt. People who participated in the celebration were asked to sign the back of the quilt. It hangs in the narthex of the church for all to remember the past and look to the future.

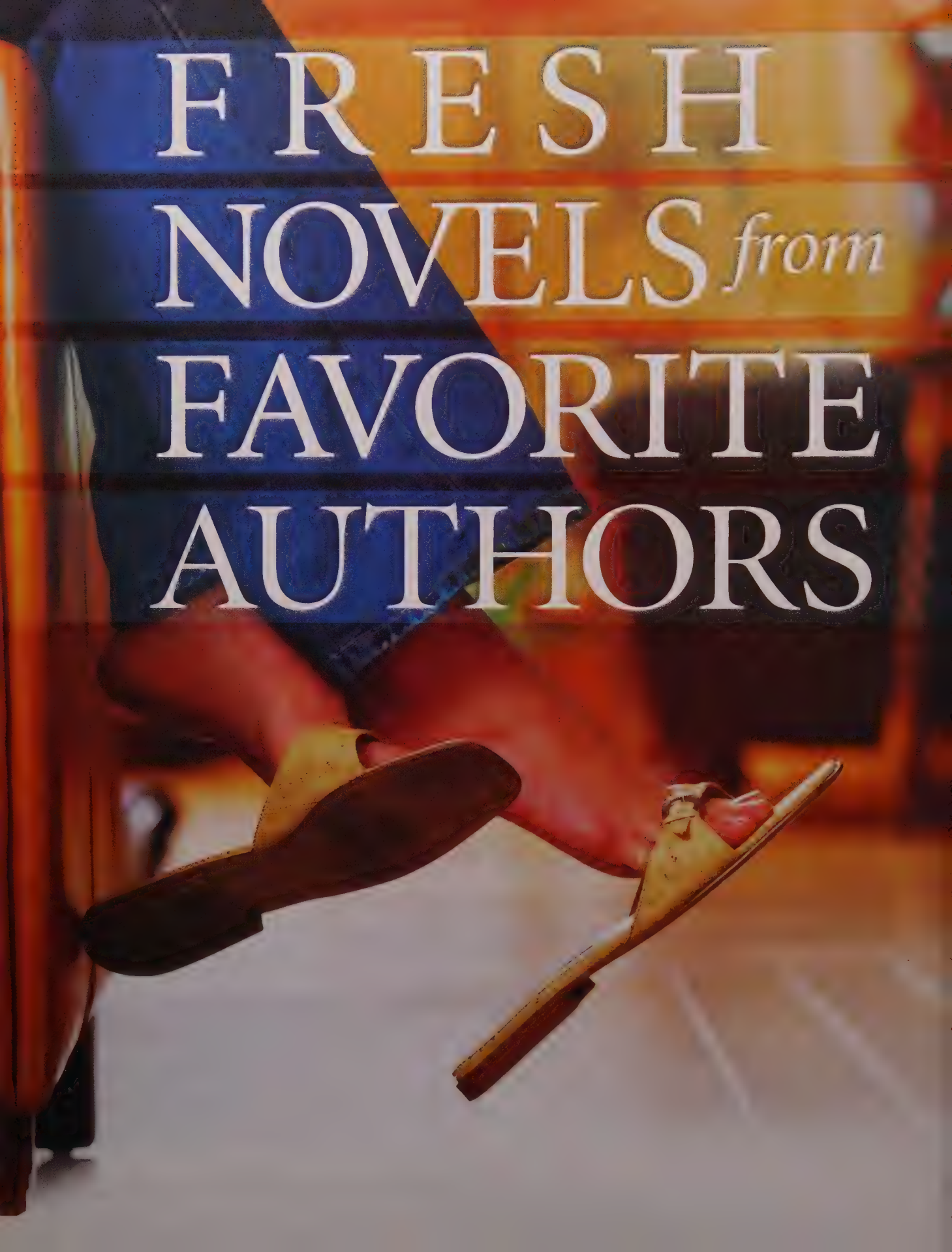
The Ladies' Aid Society that began with hand-sewn buttonholes has evolved, but the love of Christ remains at the center of their work. These friends share their talent, their Christian faith, and their desire to warm God's people around the corner or around the world with their fabric of love.

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**Carol Kehlmeier is a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Westerville, Ohio. Her work has appeared in *The Lutheran*, *Celebrate Life*, and *Signs of the Times*.**



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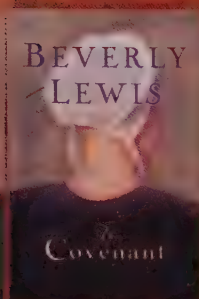




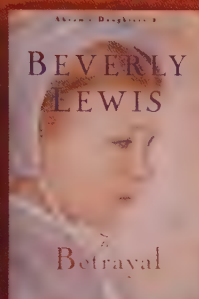
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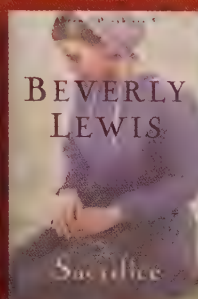
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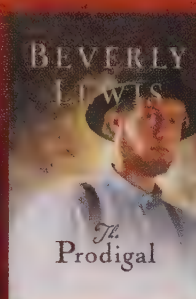
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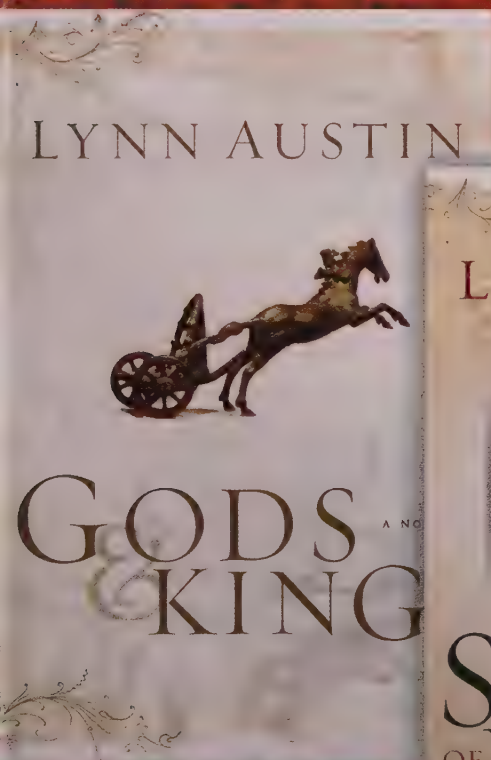
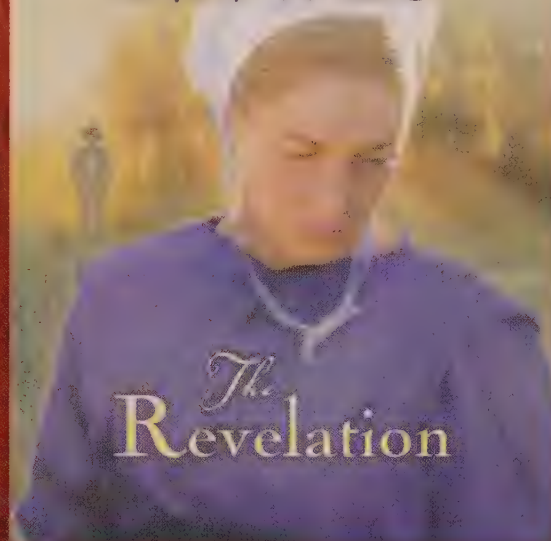
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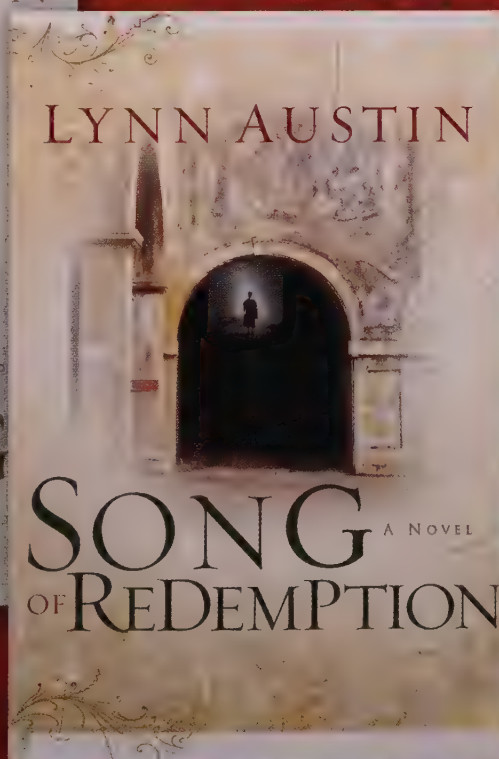
# BEVERLY LEWIS



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# Introduction to Summer Study



by Sarah S. Henrich

## Being a Woman, Called to Be Bold

Boldness is not a simple word in any language, including our own. Each of us—individually, as part of the culture in which we’ve grown up, as people living in the here and now—hears the word boldness a bit differently. One woman’s boldness is another woman’s aggression. One’s woman’s straightforwardness is another woman’s “attitude.” Boldness can be seen as over the top, pushing the envelope, over the edge. How we identify and react to boldness all depends on who is being bold and whose envelope is being pushed. When do we say “You go, girl!” and when are we a little uncomfortable saying anything?

In this world of many cultures, boldness is usually more controversial for women than it is for men. Most cultures expect boldness in men; we believe that boldness is required of men as protectors and leaders, but we are still a bit new to considering women as public leaders, protectors, authority figures.

In our Scripture, the word translated as “boldness” can also be translated as “confidence.” Confidence in the promises and presence of God allows us, indeed calls us, to step forward boldly. For thousands of years God has called women as well as men to step forward in service to one another for God’s sake. Our Scripture leads, challenges, and supports us as we learn to claim boldly the gracious promises of God’s powerful Spirit working among and through us. As we consider boldness in these three sessions this month and in July/August, we will

hear stories that invite us to pause and take a long look at many of our ideas about women, about leadership, and most importantly, about serving God.

Confidence—or trust—in God’s call leads to our bold response. We will take up three different ways in which we are called to live out our boldness in Christ. In our first session, we seek to understand and boldly claim the calling given to each of us as individuals. How does the Holy Spirit take hold of us, fill us, and shape us for godly life? The second session focuses on our boldness within our own families and communities. In the third session, we will focus on what it means to be bold for Christ’s sake in the larger world of those who are strangers to us.

As you can see, these three focal points—individual, familiar community, and then wider arena—can only be separated for study purposes. They overlap and interlock. Instead of three sequential movements (starting with me, then moving outward), we find our callings as bold witnesses in a more circular way. As we take a bold step toward getting a neighborhood park cleaned up, for instance, we may only then discover that it has been the Spirit calling us to this way of loving our neighbor.

So come as you are. Where do you find yourself among these stories of God’s people called to confident boldness in their lives? Where would you like to find yourself? What would be helpful to you as you seek to claim your own calling as a bold woman of God?

**Session 1**

# Finding My Boldness

by Sarah S. Henrich

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## The Story of Deborah

### Judges 4:1—5:31

**Please read Judges 4:1–6.** We meet our first leader, Deborah, under a palm tree in the faraway hill country of Ephraim, north of Jerusalem. The stories of Deborah come from the oldest part of the Bible, yet she is introduced simply and straightforwardly. It seems no comment was required to explain or justify a woman judge in ancient Israel. Identified as both prophetess and wife, Deborah works from home: “. . . the Israelites came up to her for judgment” (Judges 4:5).

It is important to underline how naturally these remarkable facts are presented. It seems that those who put together even these oldest stories accepted the judges whom God sent without quibbling about gender. This does not mean that gender was not important in the thinking of the ancient Israelites; in fact, just a little later in this story of Deborah, she announces to the military man Barak that his God-given success will not lead to his glory because God will give his opponent “into the hand of a woman” (4:9). Yet the fact that Barak takes orders from Deborah does not seem to bother him or diminish his importance. How does Barak understand the role of this remarkable woman, prophetess, judge, and wife? How do we?

Let’s begin with the idea of a judge. In our language and place, judges are connected to the

legal system, hearing cases and making decisions in accordance with that system. Judges are well trained in the theories and practices that make up the law. Whether it is a Supreme Court justice or Judge Judy on television, we know what the judge’s job should be and how much authority he or she has. However, this contemporary picture is far from the biblical word that is translated into English as “judge.” The biblical judges were gifted leaders of the people, called by God to save the people in times of need. God pitied the people’s misery and found leaders who would help them. The Bible tells us that whenever this happened, the Lord “was with the judge,” and the judge was empowered to serve God among the people.

As for Deborah, we have no information about how or why she became one of Israel’s trusted leaders. When we first encounter her, she is already seated under her palm tree and meeting with those who come for her inspired wisdom. Deborah, a married woman who continued in this work, breaks down many of our stereotypes about women in ancient Israel. Our greatest stereotype concerning women’s lack of power and authority is overturned by a few simple words in verse 6: Deborah sends, summons, and then delivers the command of the Lord God of Israel to Barak. With no hedging, no apology, no defensiveness, she simply declares to him what he must do and



what she will do, according to God's command. They both follow through.

How easy to imagine Deborah saying something like, "I hate to bother you, Barak. I know how busy you are, but God has told me to ask you this. I'm not sure why. . . ." Deborah does not do this. Her power is acknowledged as coming from God. She has wielded this power with care over time, so she is trusted. She says what she must say and puts herself on the line to back up God's requests. Neither seeking power nor afraid of it, she trusts that God is indeed with her for the sake of Israel.

### **Please read Judges 5:1–9**

In Judges 5, believed to be the oldest part of the Hebrew Bible, it is Deborah and Barak who together sing the story of God's victory; God was indeed with them. Deborah "arose as a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:7), though her mothering is far from the ordinary image of it. She is the mother of warriors, of victory given to the "commanders of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people" (5:9). For this, the only response is "Bless the Lord" (5:9).

Deborah's activities seem far from those of our ordinary lives. Yet we may find similarities across millennia and across cultures. Deborah lives a simple life; her work is before her as are her family obligations. She lives among her people until duty calls her to bold action.

It is important for us to ponder her call. The Bible gives no hint of how Deborah comes to know God's command for Barak and the people. Does she have a vision, hear God's word in a dream, or simply sense that the time is right and there is only one person who can command? However she comes to her understanding, she has

to place enormous trust in God to take these very risky steps. She trusts that God is indeed with her. She believes that God will continue in God's promise to be with the people in times of peril. Then she acts upon that with a boldness that can come only from such trust.

Many of us can remember other women and men we have known who have shown this kind of boldness, which springs from steadfast trust in God's presence among us. Most often these are not the people we find interviewed on television or in magazines. Their lives are not dramatic, filled with excitement, danger, or daring. Rather, their lives are marked by persevering faith in the service of God's people, somehow, in some way. Then at some point, that quiet confidence demands a step down a less ordinary, more risky path. Boldness is required to imagine our ordinary lives as lived in the presence of God; it is also required to step out to serve God in more radical ways.

Think, for example, of Rosa Parks going about her work, living a modest life and for long years accepting injustice and harassment. But Parks' deep and abiding faith in a trustworthy, just God led her to a step that changed the face of a nation. Parks was not an aggressive person, but she showed the boldness that springs from faith and the power of God's Holy Spirit.

How does this bold gentleness—the simple, unapologetic strength that springs from confidence in oneself as a child of God—come to life for us and among us in our own days? What messages can we trust? What hopes spring from God's Spirit and not simply our own desires? These are important questions in a time when so many people who hold contradictory views call upon God as the guarantor of their beliefs.

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER

By considering again Deborah's roles—wife, prophetess, judge—we can begin to imagine our own boldness and what calls it forth.

1. The roles in which we live boldly are multiple and varied. How might boldness look different in one's role as wife, daughter, friend, worshiper, student, worker, employer?
2. From whom did you learn boldness rooted in confident faith?
3. Who inspires you today?

### Acts 4:1–31

**Please read Acts 4:23–31.** Let's look at one more biblical story together to see if we can find any more clues about God-given boldness. In this long story, Peter and John have healed a 40-year-old man who has been lame from birth. This they have done in Jesus' name to the glory of God. But this bold public action has gotten Peter and John into trouble with the local authorities. The two disciples are ordered to cease to "speak or teach" in the name of Jesus. They refuse to make this promise, but they are released anyway because of the support of the people. After returning to their friends and fellow believers (Acts 4:23), these early Christians pray together for the power of the Spirit to "speak your word with all boldness. . . ." At the end of their prayer, God's presence is made amazingly clear to them by a "spiritual earthquake." The Holy Spirit's

presence is also made clear by the ability they all had to speak the word of God "with boldness." There it is again!

Ordinary people gather together to pray, share stories of God at work among them, share their hopes, and study Scripture. What happens? They are filled with the Spirit, given confidence to speak based on God's presence with them. Barriers of status and gender fade before the Spirit's empowerment to serve God's people—and serve they do. Knowing that the cost may be great, these women and men—some whom we know, some whom we don't—go forward with boldness to share the Good News of God's presence and power for us all.

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Are these people so different from us? They do the same kinds of things that we, baptized in the name of Jesus, also do. How might we participate in this kind of boldness?
2. What does it mean that we can do this?
3. How is boldness connected to the idea of taking up one's cross?

**Sarah S. Henrich** is associate professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. She has written and led many Bible studies for a wide variety of groups throughout the Lutheran church.



**Session 1: Finding My Boldness**

# The Story of Deborah

by Sarah S. Henrich

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## Materials and preparation

It is useful to have writing materials and Bibles (a variety of translations can add interest to the discussion) available for participants. For at least the first session, name tags are helpful as well. If possible, participants should sit in such a way that they can see one another's faces; this will encourage conversation. For the closing, you will need copies of the Lutheran *Book of Worship, This Far by Faith*, or another hymnal.

## Overview

This study focuses on how two quite different biblical characters came to be bold witnesses to God in their daily lives. We can glimpse the sources and the outcome of this boldness in their stories. We read about Deborah in both story and poetry in the Old Testament book of Judges. The song of Deborah is one of the oldest portions of the entire Bible. Peter's story is told in the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament, which comes from a much later time. These two stories together remind us that God has been inspiring women and men with confident boldness from the beginning. Whatever our circumstances, as different as we may be each from the other, we are called to live confident of God's presence and work among us. We never know when our lives may become witnesses to God's power.

You may want to read the introduction to the study together. Take time to point out the ques-

tions at the end of the first introduction (page 30) and remind participants to keep them in mind as they move through the study. Before moving on, ask participants to recall a time when they felt particularly confident in a decision or action. Offer just a few minutes to share their recollection with one other person.

## The Story of Deborah

Point out the straightforward way in which the Bible tells the story of Deborah. In this ancient story, a woman of Israel holds a very responsible position of public authority. Encourage participants to think about women in such positions today (including themselves). What are some of the difficulties that women face in such roles?

The story also makes clear that Deborah is a wife. In Deborah's society, husbands had authority over their wives both legally and by custom. What kinds of conflict might Deborah have experienced between her calling as judge under God's authority and her calling as wife under her husband's authority? Are such conflicts different for men and for women?

Ask your group to imagine some ways in which Deborah may have begun to understand her call to her work. Participants may draw their ideas from other biblical stories or from their own experiences. Participants might compare the call of Moses (Exodus 3:1–4:17) or of Mary (Luke 1:26–38) or of Paul (Acts 9:1–19). These calls are all very

different in terms of witnesses to the process, the appearance of special signs, the giving of a clear message from God, the response of the one called. God does not force an acceptance of the call, though God or God's messenger is persistent.

These examples of various divine calls and various human responses should open our eyes to the plethora of ways that God engages us and guides us into lives of service. Ask participants in what ways each of us might experience a call from God today. Such calls often come from the recommendation of others, our own perceptions of a need that must be filled, family expectations, or personal experiences of many kinds. Lutherans believe that God sets us in a variety of roles in which we are called to live our Christian lives. You might ask each participant to jot down how she is called by God in her own life.

### Paul and John in Acts

The story in Acts 4 speaks directly to us of the connection between the power of the Holy Spirit and our own boldness. In Acts 2, we hear that it is Jesus who pours out the Holy Spirit from his place at God's right hand (Acts 2:33). In this assertion, the author of Acts tells us that the Holy Spirit is God alive and at work among us as Jesus was. Believers could trust that they were not on their own, but that God's power for good would work through them just as it had through God's people for so long. This power is also for us, the baptized children of God who have received the promised Spirit. Your study group may want to think about how we experience and recognize the Spirit in our midst.

### Questions to Ponder

The questions on page 33 are designed to encourage participants to make connections between boldness based on God's call and the different

calls we experience in our lives. As leader you may have to choose one or two questions for discussion in the group. There are many ways to approach these questions. Participants may want to jot down answers and share them. Groups of just two or three can share responses briefly. Some participants may keep an informal journal of responses to questions. Be sure to encourage everyone to speak or write responses. When responses are shared aloud, help the group focus on hearing from each person. Discussing or correcting responses will discourage conversation. Make sure that no one feels forced to respond if she is uncomfortable.

Don't be afraid of your creativity. Boldly try ways to foster discussion for participants in your time and place. Group members may wish to discuss particular questions. If the group discovers a topic or question of interest, participants are likely to benefit from discussion.

### Closing

Keep the closing simple. You may wish to sing a hymn, read the prayer from Ephesians 6:14–17, or pray the Lord's Prayer together. Some possible hymns include *LBW* 383, 393, 403, 406, 436, 486, or *TFBF* 225, 232.

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**Sarah S. Henrich** is associate professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. She has written and led many Bible studies for a wide variety of groups throughout the Lutheran church.



## The Limits of Welcome

by Elisabeth Kellogg

**WHEN I OPENED MY JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005 ISSUE OF THIS MAGAZINE AND BEGAN TO READ THROUGH IT,** I found it very hard to put down. It seemed like virtually every article in it was written for me. Yet, they were not written to comfort me as much as to challenge me to reach out with boldness and talk about the struggle that my sisters and I face.

Indeed, the theme on the contents page, “Who is invited to the Great Banquet? Are you? Is your neighbor? Are there enough chairs for all?” said it all.

I was first drawn to Linda Post Bushkofsky’s Grace Notes column, “Who’s Welcome in the Circle?” where she speaks of the mission of the Women of the ELCA to “advocate for the oppressed and voiceless, urge change in systems and structures that exclude and alienate” (p. 49). She goes on to speak of “affirmation of individual worth” and “inclusiveness.” And yet she acknowledges a lack of perfection with the question, “Do all of our units or all of our participants order their lives in these ways?” No; each of us is human, after all.

Audrey West in Bible study session 5, “Guess Who’s Coming for Dinner?” points out that “Luke’s Gospel seems to be especially concerned with turning our expectations of who is in and who is out upside down” (p. 30). She continued, “Jesus’ parable suggests that society’s outcasts or people on the margins are invited to the feast. If Jesus were telling this parable today in your neighborhood, who might be listed in the place of ‘the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame’?” (p. 33).

What is not stated in this parable—though it is clear from Luke’s context, and even more clear in Matthew—is that those who had originally been invited to the table tried to stop the less acceptable guests when they heard they were coming. “But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them” (Matthew 23:13–14). This is still happening today. Do you know what it is like to walk into church past a row of protestors shouting that God hates you and that you are going to hell? I do.

Susan M. Lang (“Bold Relationships: Linking Heart and Hand”) points this out saying, “We may also exclude people we don’t consider worthy.” And, “Acknowledging our prejudices can be difficult” (p. 39). Yet, Linda Daniels-Block (“God’s Table: Room for All”) shows us that there are those who “have decided to stand up and declare whose table this altar really is” (p. 24).

I believe that God has called me—as one of those people who might be listed among the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame—to stand up and say that I am not sure that I am welcome in the circle. You see, while I identify myself as a woman, I was not born with a female body. I am a transgendered person. It is about welcoming people like me that I am concerned.

I have been in a number of churches over the years that call themselves welcoming congregations

and have noticed the limits of that welcome. I have been welcomed to worship, to Bible study, yes, even the altar guild. Have I ever been welcomed into a women's circle? No.

Barbara Lundblad, in "Sermon in the Spotlight: The Problem of Good Reasons," admits that "Good reasons often keep us from following the One who ate with those we'd never invite to dinner" (p. 17). I acknowledge that there are good reasons for not accepting people like me. I am not allowed on the campus of my children's Lutheran school because I look "different" and the administration is afraid of losing enrollment. I acknowledge that I am not worthy to be considered a woman, though that is how I self-identify. Yet, neither am I worthy of the grace of God, and it was good to hear Heidi Jo Hagstrom ("Mothering Seasons: Tangible Expressions of Grace") talk about suspending judgment and coming face to face in a place of grace with those who are different.

She also challenged me with the question, "What is God calling you to do? Don't run from it as Jonah

did" (p. 41). Marj Leegard's quotation of Isaiah 41:13 in "Give Us This Day: Farewells and Greetings" reminds me that God is holding my hand so I need not be afraid. Sometimes it would be so easy to give up. But I am here to pray on behalf of those who are your sisters by choice rather than by birth.

In Bible study session 6, "Empowering Persistence," Audrey West calls the parable of the persistent widow "a model for all who work persistently for justice" (p. 42). To fill the places around the dinner table of the persistent host, will you welcome us into your circle?

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Elisabeth Kellogg has three children and lives in Minneapolis, Minn., with her spouse of 24 years. She has served on the board of Lutherans Concerned-North America. Some of her writing was collected in the book, *By the Grace of God: Lee Frances Heller and Friends: Writing for Families, Friends and Clergy* (SSP Publications, 2001).

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*Lutheran Woman Today* invites you to speak boldly about a personal experience or observation on a unique topic. In a letter or e-mail, specify the subject, "Speaking Boldly." Send your letter to the LWT editorial office listed on page 43 in the Directory of Reader Services.

## ACTION & ADVOCACY GUIDE

### **Fuzzy-Sweater Feminist** (page 22)

Jennifer Basye Sander's books, *The Martini Diet: The Self-Indulgent Way to a Thinner, More Fabulous You!* (Fair Winds Press, 2004) and *Wear More Cashmere: 151 Luxurious Ways to Pamper Your Inner Princess* (Fair Winds Press, 2003) are available at on-line or local bookstores.

### **God in Us: Courage to Answer the Call** (page 38)

Visit the following resources to find out more about

Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai: *The Standard* ([eastandard.net](http://eastandard.net)); *U.S. News and World Report* [Her Trees Bring Peace] ([usnews.com](http://usnews.com)); BBC News ([bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk)); and [about.com](http://about.com/womenshistory) ([about.com](http://about.com/womenshistory)); [about.com/library/qu/blqumaat.htm](http://about.com/library/qu/blqumaat.htm)). For more information about exploitive economic development practices and over-consumption of energy, read the ELCA's social statement, *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice* ([elca.org/socialstatements/environment](http://elca.org/socialstatements/environment)).



# GOD IN US

## Courage to Answer the Call

by Danielle Welliever

Women are responsible for their children;  
they cannot sit back, waste time, and see  
them starve.—**WANGARI MAATHAI**



At the heart of boldness lie courage and trust rooted in a sense of purpose. On October 8, 2004, Wangari Maathai received a phone call that propelled her onto the world's stage and the pages of history. Maathai, a Kenyan woman now serving her country as deputy minister of the environment, had just been named winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. In addition to being the first African woman to be honored with this prestigious award, she was the first Peace Prize winner in the field of environmental work.

In telling Maathai's story, I am recounting the story of countless women who have risked their own well-being to improve the lives of other women and children living in poverty or marginalized in some way by power and authority. Maathai is an extraordinary woman, yet she is everywoman. As you read her story, reflect on other women you know who exhibit a similar boldness, a boldness that can only come from doing what they know to be right.

#### EARLY SURPRISES: GENDER ISSUES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Maathai was among the first students from Kenya to be awarded a scholarship to study in the United States. After completing a master of science degree in 1966 at Mount St. Scholastica College in Atchison, Kansas, she was eager to return home to her country to begin working to improve the lives of others. In an early interview, her credentials were questioned because she was a "pretty young thing." Incensed, she left the interview. She was later offered a position at the University of Nairobi as research assistant. Eventually she became the first woman from central or eastern Kenya to hold a Ph.D. and the first woman to become department head of a Kenyan university.

A second surprise was waiting for her when she returned home from her studies and found that the land near her home had been cleared of trees to plant tea, a much needed cash crop. Although the income from the tea crops improved the lives of some, others were worse off—particularly the women who had to walk farther to find firewood.

#### EVERYWOMAN ROLES: SCIENTIST, TEACHER, ORGANIZER, ACTIVIST

Wangari Maathai is a scientist. She understands the deep connections between herself, her community, and the earth. She noticed that her community and many communities in her beloved country were suffering because trees had been stripped from the land. Forest cover in Kenya was down to 2 percent, far below the United Nations recommendation of 10 percent. Without adequate forest cover, erosion and drought ensue. Women and children suffer.

As a teacher, Maathai often uses the biblical story of creation to underscore the importance of ecosystem health. She says, "God created the planet from Monday to Friday. On Saturday he created human beings. The truth of the matter is . . . if man was created on Tuesday, I usually say, he would have been dead on Wednesday,

because there would not have been the essential elements that he needs to survive."

As an organizer and activist, Maathai responded to the problem of deforestation and desertification in Kenya and the hardship for women who had to walk farther and farther to find wood for cooking by founding the Green Belt Movement. Primarily through the efforts of poor women in Kenya, this grassroots non-governmental organization has been credited with planting more than 30 million trees throughout Kenya since 1977.

#### IMPROVING LIVING CONDITIONS USING RESOURCES AT HAND

The Green Belt Movement did not happen overnight, but bold persistence paid off. Maathai said, "It took me a lot of days and nights to convince people that women could improve their environment without much technology or without much financial resources."

Since those early days, Maathai's sense of purpose and passionate commitment to improving living conditions for poor women and children in Africa have put her own well-being in jeopardy on many occasions. She has challenged governmental authorities and suffered intimidation, beatings, and arrests. On one occasion, her wit was her tool of defense. In the



middle of the night, her home was surrounded by “gun-toting figures” demanding to be let in. They accused her of holding an “illegal political meeting.” She believed that this was just an act of intimidation, so she challenged them. “Where is your search warrant? Are you so brave you need guns to deal with a lone woman?” After about an hour, they left her alone.

### BOLDNESS GROWS OUT OF NEEDS OF THE MOMENT

Her boldness grows out of the needs of the moment. Maathai said, “I didn’t get involved in activism until people were putting blocks in front of me. I was trying to plant trees, and people wouldn’t let me.” Other challenges have left her bleeding or in prison, yet she continues to boldly challenge authority that robs life, livelihood, or dignity from those who are weak and vulnerable, particularly women and children. “The difference between success and failure in life is often no more than

willingness to get up when you are down,” she said.

With the eyes of the world on Maathai, she continues to call governmental and corporate leaders to account—particularly those in the United States and other industrialized countries—for exploitive economic development practices. She also wants them to face their own issues of over-consumption, including energy consumption. In answering her own unique call, she answers our common call as women and as caretakers of God’s creation.

### ANSWERING YOUR CALL AS A CHRISTIAN WOMAN

As I learned Maathai’s story, I couldn’t help but imagine my own mother saying and doing many of the things that Maathai said and did. My mother will never be on the world’s stage nor awarded a Nobel Peace Prize, but she continually exhibits that same personal boldness that Maathai has, and in doing so, answers her own call

while setting an example for me.

Perhaps your mother, grandmother, teacher, or friend has a kind of boldness and courage that seems to reach beyond the ordinary. When you see that, look for the sense of purpose that comes from answering God’s call in our lives. Living humbly and in faith, we are free to use the resources at hand to meet our own needs as well as the needs of the community. God has provided each of us with gifts and talents that are sufficient for the day, even if that day requires us to act in extraordinary ways.

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Danielle Welliever is an environmental consultant, a small business owner, and a frequent contributor to *Lutheran Woman Today*. She is a graduate of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, Calif.

The information for this story was gathered from several sources, including *The Standard*, an on-line newspaper of East Africa, *BBC News*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *about.com*.

I don’t really know why I care so much. I just have something inside me that tells me that there is a problem, and I have got to do something about it. I think that is what I would call the God in me. All of us have God in us, and that God is the spirit that unites all life, everything that is on this planet. It must be this voice that is telling me to do something, and I am sure it’s the same voice that is speaking to everybody on this planet—at least everybody who seems to be concerned about the fate of the world, the fate of this planet.—WANGARI MAATHAI



GRACE NOTES

## Big Bold Elephants

by Mary Ellen Kiesner

**IT IS TIME FOR ME TO REFLECT, DEAR SISTERS IN CHRIST, AS I WRITE MY LAST ARTICLE FOR YOU AS** president of Women of the ELCA. Needless to say, the last three years have been quite an experience. As we close the door on the Listen! God Is Calling triennium, it is time to open a new door calling us to Act Boldly!

How does a woman find her *bold* in the name of Jesus Christ? How do I find my *bold*?

Last November, I had the opportunity to lead a delegation of women to Tanzania in response to the successful fair-trade coffee campaign, the 90 Ton Challenge. While there, we met with Bishop Mwamasika from the Dodoma diocese. As he introduced me to the gathered assembly, he referred to me as the Big Elephant. In all honesty, I was ready to take that introduction as an insult. But then he went on to say that the elephant is not like the lion that devours smaller animals. Instead, the elephant has a responsibility to take care of the weaker and less protected creatures in the animal kingdom. Bishop Mwamasika said that Women of the ELCA are like those elephants. They are a presence that can make a difference in the world. They can hear the voices of their global sisters and brothers who are crying out for compassion in action.

Those words left me with thoughts to ponder. Did you ever really look closely at an elephant? Obviously they are gentle giants. Did you ever notice their skin? It is very thick and able to withstand all sorts of punishment from the elements.

Their trunks have amazing maneuverability. They are able to pick up a peanut or carry a tree trunk. I know of no other animal that is more protective of its young. When an elephant trumpets, everyone and everything knows it is there.

We as Women of the ELCA have the opportunity to be big bold elephants! Jesus calls us to step out boldly in our faith. We are an organization that is obviously present in the world. Our skin is such that we can endure and revel in change and challenge, growth and commitment. We have the ability to be flexible in the details. We can nurture the young woman and mentor tomorrow's leaders. When we gather in community, we have the ability to make a difference in the world.

Our triennial theme verse, Acts 14:3 (NRSV), in referring to Paul and Barnabas says: "So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who testified to the word of his grace by granting signs and wonders to be done through them." We as an organization are capable of no less.

As I look back on all that our organization has encompassed in its programs and resources, mission and ministry, I have a hunch that there have been some very bold women all along. May God allow us to be big bold elephants as we continue to enable women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

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**Mary Ellen Kiesner is outgoing churchwide president of Women of the ELCA.**





AMEN!

## A Firm Foundation

by Catherine Malotky

**DEAR GOD, WHEN I HIKE IN THE WILDERNESS, I SUBSCRIBE TO THE PRACTICE OF "LEAVE NO TRACE."**

I pack out my garbage, I don't leave a fire scar, and I stick to the trails. In the wilderness, this makes a lot of sense. And it's consistent with what I've been taught about the rest of my life, especially as a woman.

I've been taught, God, not to take up too much space. Think of how unbecoming it would have been for me, a young woman, to outshine my male classmates in school. I know people still think that's true, God, because there are studies that say so. It's not beyond a girl to "dumb down" so she doesn't stick out, though this is changing slowly.

It was better, I learned, not to have strong opinions, because if you have strong opinions and voice them, people might not like you. And as a girl, being liked by others—getting along—was a high value. I learned to live under the radar. But then I read your word, and I watch Jesus at work. I catch a glimpse of Deborah and Miriam and Esther and Dorcas and Mary Magdalene and Prisca. They made a difference for their families and their neighbors and their people.

To tell the truth, God, I do have strong opinions. I care deeply about the poor and those who have trouble fitting in. Lots of my sisters do. Lots of us are smart and gifted and strong. If we've been called by you through baptism to be about your work, then living under the radar is all wrong.

We don't have to wear a neon sign. That wasn't Jesus' way or the way of any of the admirable biblical

women. But Jesus and those women held firm to their convictions and gave passionately of themselves for the sake of the world.

My aim is to be true—to you, God, and to the gifts you have given me, and to the world around me. My aim isn't to grandstand. Sometimes compromise is the best way to meet good goals shared by people who have different ways of getting there. You said it over and over again, God. Defend those who are left out, whoever they may be in our day. "Love your enemies," and maybe they won't be enemies anymore, just people with different ideas.

Of course, I think it's much easier to deal with people who like me and who agree with me. It's much easier because this is what I learned. What if I also learned how to live with conflict, to speak my convictions clearly but without coercion (or martyrdom!), and to solve problems rather than make enemies?

What if I believed that you made me, a valuable addition to this world, as valuable as any other? Now that would be a place to be rooted. That would be firm ground from which to shine and stretch and give.

Convince me, God, every day if you must, that I have something to give, and give me the courage to give it. Amen.

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**Catherine Malotky serves the ELCA Board of Pensions as representative to several synods in the Upper Midwest. An ordained pastor, she has also been an editor, teacher, parish pastor, and retreat leader.**





## LWT Acts Boldly in Peace

*Lutheran Woman Today* is modeling the "Act Boldly" theme of the Sixth Triennial Gathering with an unprecedented ecumenical move: Next month, we are joining three other Christian women's magazines in publishing several major articles on peace.

The other magazines are *Glad Tidings*, published by the Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada; *Horizons*, published by Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); and *Response*, published by United Methodist Women of the United Methodist Church.

The editors believe the best part of the July/August issue is that a combined readership of more than 200,000 women will be touched by the same stories and inspired by the same ideas, regardless of where and how they worship.

Readers are asked to join in the landmark event by sharing the stories with others and by discussing ways to celebrate the International Day of Peace on September 21. Try coordinating an ecumenical dialogue on peace and praying for those who don't live in peace.

Beginning September 2005 and continuing through July/August 2006, *Lutheran Woman Today* will highlight women peacemakers in a special section, Global Spotlight: Praying for our Peacemakers.

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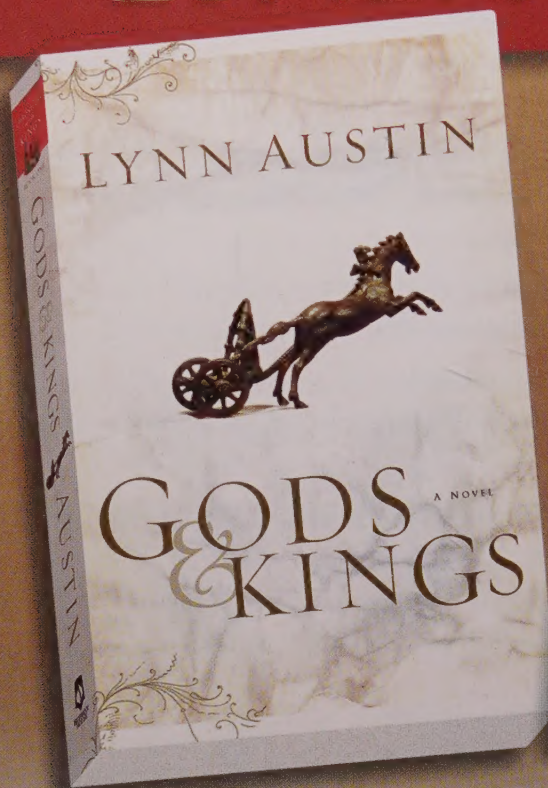
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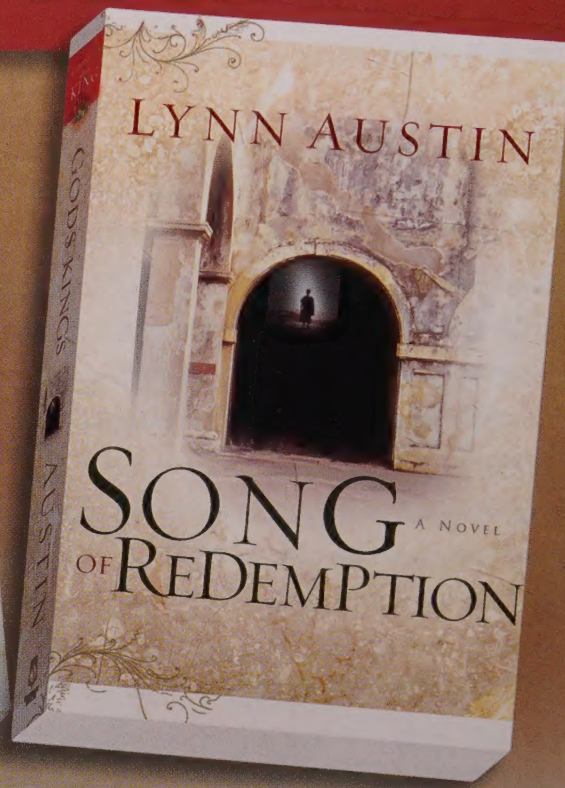
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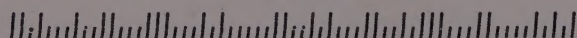
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